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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000837

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF A/S CARSON, SE GRATION, S/USSES  
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SUBJECT: SUDAN: CDA MEETS WITH SLA/MM REBEL FACTION LEADER  
MINI MINNAWI

Classified By: CDA Robert Whitehead for reasons 1.4 (b( and (d)

11. (C) Summary: CDA Whitehead, the DCM and POLOFF met with Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA/MM) faction leader, Mini Minnawi and senior advisor Ali Traio at Minnawi's Khartoum residence on July 9. Minnawi began the meeting by saying that while the current situation in Darfur remains quiet, he was not confident it would remain that way for long. He noted that number of Darfuris forced to flee to internally displaced persons (IDP) camps was increasing on a daily basis due to continuing instability. Minnawi also noted increasing tensions between Chad and Sudan. He stated that although each country's proxy rebel group had suffered recent military losses, both were regrouping and being re-supplied for subsequent attacks. He added that he believed that the National Congress Party (NCP) will steal upcoming national elections scheduled for April 2010 and that UN Mission to Darfur (UNAMID) acted as a pawn of the NCP in Darfur. End Summary

12. (C) During an initial courtesy call with SLM/MM's Mini Minnawi, the latter told the CDA that the people of Darfur do not feel that the upcoming elections will be fair. Minnawi warned that the NCP was "planning something8 in Darfur, noting the increased number of police and Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) soldiers in the region. Minnawi said he had not registered his political faction for the April 2010 elections because he was convinced that the NCP would use fraud and GOS resources to win. In his view, both the South's Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and opposition political parties in the north were divided and unprepared to field credible candidates for the Government of National Unity (GNU) presidency in the upcoming elections. Minnawi dismissed the claims of Umma party head Sadiq al Mahdi that he represented the interests of the people of Darfur. He added that Umma's claims to a historic constituency in Darfur were little more than fanciful. Minnawi said the SPLM's Salva Kiir was unlikely to compete against incumbent President Omar al Bashir for the GONU presidency because under terms of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement Kiir would have to step down as president of the Government of Southern to do so. Given that there was no other candidate with a national following, the NCP's Bashir would be easily re-elected with his party rigging the vote in its favor in parliamentary and local electoral races. Minnawi said that under such circumstances, he had no intention of registering SLA/MM as a political party to compete in the elections.

13. (C) Turning to the recently-announced results of the national census, Minnawi complained that the count had been unfair with the GOS falsifying the number of Arabs in Sudan

and excluded or left uncounted other ethnic groups including non-Arabs in Darfur's IDP camps. Minnawi said that according to his calculations, the number of Arabs had tripled in all of Darfur and the number of Arab nomads had increased by 312%. Additionally, he claimed the GOS inflated the number of rural inhabitants in places such as Waha, whose population had increased by 200 percent, with most being counted as Arabs. Conversely, he maintained that the count in Western Darfur showed a dramatic decrease in its predominantly non-Arabic ethnic population from 1.7 to 1.4 million over the last ten years. Minnawi charged the GOS had re-mapped electoral districts and effectively deleted eight local non Arabic areas by not counting the inhabitants.

¶4. (C) Minnawi questioned the intent of the Justice and Equality Movement's (JEM) participation in GOS organized peace talks in Doha. He said that JEM had never been a serious rebel movement in Darfur where it held no territory and had little popular support. He described JEM's as being guided by former National Islamic Front founder and present Popular Congress Party opposition party leader Hassan al Turabi, a hard line Islamist who was purged by the NCP in ¶1999. He said Turabi was the ideological force behind JEM operations; further explaining that Turabi creates the plan and JEM implements it. He maintained that Turabi laid out planning for JEM's military operations against the GOS. Minnawi added that in his view, JEM was involved in the Doha talks to make "deals" but not "peace" with the GOS. The DCM asked Minnawi about the recent alliance between the UMMA Party and JEM. Minnawi replied that JEM was using UMMA and noted that all of the points in the agreement between the two reflected JEM's ideas with nothing of benefit to UMMA. Minnawi said a cease-fire was unlikely in Darfur because no

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one party spoke for a unified rebel front in the conflict. He charged that UNAMID was nothing more than a pawn of the NCP and was falling far short of its peacekeeping mandate in Darfur.

¶5. (C) Regarding GOS motives in the Doha negotiations on Darfur he charged the GOS was not interested in solving the region's problems but rather pursuing its own political and economic agenda. Minnawi complained that the international community was not doing enough to put pressure on the GOS to resolve the problems in Darfur. The CDA noted that there was an array of international pressures being brought to bear on the GOS including UN Security Council resolutions to encourage the GOS to move toward peace in Darfur; U.S. and international economic sanctions; and the ICC indictment against President Bashir. Minnawi said the GOS had weathered such pressure in the past without altering its course. The CDA concluded that with decreased levels of violence in Darfur, the GOS and rebel movements currently had a window to try and hammer out a peace deal. He noted that the first step would be a cease-fire that creates an environment conducive to bridge from conflict and humanitarian relief to recovery and development.

¶6. (C) Comment: There was not a good deal new here. From his precarious perch in government, Minnawi remains deeply skeptical of NCP intentions and remains at odds with other rebel factions operating in Darfur and Chad, especially the JEM. He was unusually expansive in his conversation and did not detour into historical retrospective, as he often does. Although Minnawi's following in Darfur is much reduced, he retains enough influence there to pay a role in brokering a broader political solution.

WHITEHEAD